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THE LOOSHAIS
IN
PEACE AND WAR.

BY BENJAMIN AITKEN.

(Reprinted from "The Times of India" and "The Englishman" of March and April, 1891.)

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THE LOOSHAIS IN PEACE AND WAR.

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CHAPTER I.—THE WAY TO CHANGSIL.

Don't go by Chittagong. The Koladyne looks tempting on the map, but Thanruma is at large, and one or two other Chiefs who ought to be in custody or out of the way; so you may find that stream to be the bourne whence no traveller returns. Therefore make a circumbendibus and strike Changsil from the north. Moreover, pronounce it after Chang, the Chinaman, who possibly founded the old bazar at the place. The Hunterian spelling has so habituated people to diacritical marks that when the mark is left out, as it usually is, one is apt to say Chungsil. Make your way from Calcutta first by rail and steamer to Fenchuganj. If you have not a through ticket, you may have to wait a quarter of an hour at Goalundo because the Baboo has gone away with the key. Never mind: it is all right: you can pass the time watching the tea-garden coolies crowding on to the steamer. They push and pull and scream worse than the Ooriyas on the Chandbali boats, and one wonders why the simple device of a few barriers along the passage way is not adopted, especially as women with loads on their heads and babies in their arms get the worst of the rough handling. After a pleasant day's steaming with a skipper who may be a very DeQuincey in conversation, you change at Narainganj into a smaller boat, with more comfortable cabins and a serang for a captain.

Do not be alarmed if you hear that there was cholera on the last boat, or is to be cholera on the next. That is simply Indian life. The three Looshai Chiefs who were recently deported through Silchar to Tezpur went in charge of an officer and thirty sepoys, and three of the guard fell victims to the disease at Narainganj. About the same time a Punjab regiment

or detachment, going home after good service in these parts, lost, some say eleven some say seventeen, of its strength by cholera. So fortify yourself with your specific, whatever that be, and puff vigorously at your cigar if you are a smoker. It is also good to tell cholera stories from your past experience, especially if you have ever been in the midst of an epidemic. Crocodiles and porpoises will help to beguile the time, with a few birds and an occasional flock of ducks or geese. But be sure of your shooting before you fire at them. Mr. X. winged a whistling teal, and then persuaded the serang to give it chase in the jolly-boat, from which he fired eight more cartridges at his game before we had the tough morsel for dinner. You reach Fenchuganj about the middle of the third day after leaving Calcutta, and that is the terminus of the steamer route in the dry season. Let me say, before parting from these boats, that the servants are clean and attentive, the table is excellent and abundant, and the charges are moderate.

From Fenchuganj you next make your way in a Native craft, about the size of a Calcutta dingy, to Silchar. But if you have a friend in Sylhet, borrow his horse and ride fifteen miles to that place. Sylhet is less important as a European station than Silchar, and more important as a Native town. It would be difficult to find another town with such a large population living in huts : and the huts are not clustered together, as if the place were a collection of villages, but are spread out, with yards and compounds between, while the whole is embedded out of sight in a jungle of bamboos and other trees. In the middle is a hill about the size of Cumballa Hill at Bombay, looking from the top of which you suppose yourself in a wilderness of jungle that reaches to the horizon, whereas you are surrounded by some 30,000 people, whom a Roderick Dhu might call into sight with a flourish. Moreover, they are a more than usually prosperous people, and therefore more than usually litigious, offering an El Dorado to that profession of benefactors known as pleaders. They are also fond of club law, and often go to the cutcherry as prisoners when they might have gone as litigants. Things appear to be worse in Cachar in this respect, for out of 400 prisoners at work on the road to Changsil, no fewer than 300 are there for rioting. Tell the E. B. S. Railway to put Fenchuganj, Karimganj, and Silchar on that two-anna

route-map of theirs: it is too good a map to be spoiled by the want of three such important places.

Silchar is the capital of the district of Cachar. Whether you go to Silchar from Fenchuganj or from Sylhet, the time will be three or four days if you promise the boatmen bakhshish, and four or five days if you do not. The boat is towed along the bank by the boatmen, who might almost cope with a Chinaman in walking day and night over rocks and mud. When you get tired of lying down in the boat, you can get out and walk. You will observe that the dogs do not come out of the villages and bark at you, according to the common experience in India. The people being largely Muhammadans, who hold dogs to be unclean, there are fewer of them, and those few seem to be free from caste antipathies and to believe in the brotherhood of man. If you can borrow horses you may ride to Silchar while your baggage goes by boat: the distance is 74 miles, and the road is good. Of the four ways of acquiring a horse, you are confined in Assam to buying and borrowing; one is not to be hired, and stealing is dangerous.

At Silchar you will see a strangely mixed Hindoo and Muhammadan population, with uncouth Nagas and ornamental Manipuris. It is an administrative fiction to call the Surma Valley Assam. Oudh is more the North-Western Provinces than Cachar is Assam. There is less Assamese there than English. There used, in the olden time, to be a Raja of Cachar, who was probably himself a usurper, but his territory was overrun by Manipuri marauders, and after them by Burmese; and although he turned Hindoo, in the hope of consolidating his kingdom and creating an influential Brahman court, he and his people were wiped out, or else betook themselves to the hills. The Hindus had come from Bengal or further west, and they found an undisturbed asylum in Manipur, and today Gwalior and Indore are not more staunchly Brahmanical than that little State far back among the mountains. Then the Muhammadans came and had their day. All this time the hill tribes, north and south, used to make things lively, harrying the plains, carrying off captives, and complicating the population. Under the British these tribes have one by one been subdued, and have not been slow to learn that trading in the plains pays better than marauding. Even the Looshais had learned the

lesson, and used to do a brisk business at Bepari Bazaar, which is the name of Changsil on the maps; but unhappily when we quarrelled with their neighbours on the Koladyne, they took their part, and the work has now to be done over again. Two other causes of confusion in the population of Cachar deserve to be noted. The district is full of garden coolies from different parts of India; and sepoys and domestic servants finding wives cheap among the Khasis and other hill tribes, provide themselves when duty takes them there. The fact that they have left wives behind in the plains does not give them concern till it is time for them to return home; and then—but why repeat an oft-told tale?

If you are not tired of the little boat, you can go on in it to Jhalnacherra, the next objective point from Silchar; it will take eight or nine days, for the river winds much in the hilly ground leading to the mountains. But the distance by road is only 50 miles, and ponies are easily borrowed; so everybody rides. At the worst I would rather walk than have any more of the boat. The intermediate ground is alternately bamboo jungle and tea-gardens. Unceasing hospitality makes the planters generous, and splendid fellows they are, sure to rally to a call to arms and defend the Government to the last. No political fads interfere with their duty: they uphold the Government because they ought. They have far too much to do with the Natives to hold indefinite or illogical views about them: they positively like the coolies, and merely laugh at the Baboos. As for the coolies, if I were not a special correspondent, I would turn garden-coolie myself. They are as hale and hearty as I am, and the women wear more jewellery than ours do. Their huts are like the model kintals which Calcutta philanthropists invented a few years ago, and are kept in better repair. They have as many cattle of their own as an African Chief, and their rice-fields would avert a famine. They indulge freely in the luxuries of litigation, rioting, and mutiny, and when they retire, they go into business in Cachar rather than return to the indigence and slavery of their own districts. Don't tell Mr. W. S. Caine, but the planters are divided on the subject of having liquor shops about the gardens. Some dislike the liquor shops because they lose the services of their coolies for several days after pay day every month. Others are willing to put up with that inconvenience,

because when the coolies spend their money on drink they remain poor and do not leave the garden to set up on their own account.

Jhalnacherra is on the border of Cachar, at the base of the Looshai Hills. It is an abandoned tea-garden; and was a depot for troops and stores during the late expedition. It still contains a tahsildar, a telegraph office, and a few sepoys. A hill about 200 feet high is surmounted by a stockade, with a *machan* from which a look-out used to be kept for Looshais. The neighbouring garden, now under the management of Mr. Chalmers, a keen naturalist, was the scene of Mr. Winchester's murder in 1871. People ask sometimes what became of Mary Winchester, who was carried off then, and recovered eight months afterwards by a military expedition.* Be it known, then, that she was sent to Scotland, whence she had accompanied her father to India only a year or two before he was killed. People at Silchar and on the gardens along the way still talk kindly and sadly of Lieutenant Swinton, who was summoned from Shillong after Captain Browne's treacherous murder, and made a very favourable impression on Europeans and Natives as he hurried to his death between Jhalnacherra and Changsil.

CHAPTER II.—BOATING ON THE DHALESHWARI.

Jhalnacherra is on the border between Cachar and the Looshai Hills, and it takes five days by boat to reach Changsil. Government has just made a road from the plains, but it has not had time to supersede the old-fashioned river-route, and for the swift passage down the river will have the preference till a railway is made into the land of the Looshais. In a straight line the distance is perhaps not more than thirty miles. The river is called anything from the Hunterian Dhaleshwari to the Anglo-Indian Dully-sorry. For five laborious days the little boat is pushed along with bamboo poles, negotiating

* *Note added in* 1908.—Lord Roberts accompanied the expedition as Senior Staff Officer, and his "Forty-one Years in India" contains a graphic account of the land and the people and the fighting. News about the rescued child was unexpectedly published in Calcutta last year. She was sent to Elgin, her father's native town, and passed creditably through school and college. She is now Mrs. Innes Howie, and lives in London. She helps the cause of Missions, and keeps up her interest in the scenes of her childhood, and even in the tribes whom she has such good cause to forget.

shallows, rocks, and fallen trees on its way, and many an overturned wreck shows where the rapids have proved too much for the ingenuity and exertions of the boatmen. If I had Stanley's pen I could match "Darkest Africa" with the forests of these Looshai Hills, where the dense foliage of towering trees, the interminable bamboo jungle, and the tangled brake and thicket, make an impenetrable shade—

> "Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
> And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been."

The Looshais are up on the hill-tops. Down in the lower ranges solitude reigns. All day long, but chiefly in the cool of the morning, the woods ring with the calls of countless birds which neither naturalist nor feather-hunter has yet disturbed. The musical mimicry of the *bhimraj* leads the chorus; hill bulbuls roll out their liquid notes as they frolic among the bushes; thrushes and warblers sing their own songs, wild finches, chats and pipits, titmouses and flycatchers, pipe and whistle in every key till there seems no end to their melody. Less musical, but not less joysome, parrots of strange wing shriek and chatter as they fly between the hills; wood-peckers of gay plumage screech with their harsh voices; the grating call of the giant hornbill, always in pairs, comes from the tallest trees; the hoot of the crow-pheasant is followed by the spread of its red wings as it sails to a further thicket; jungle cocks crow on every hand, and as the boat draws near cock and hen fly across the river with a loud cackle; kingfishers squeak, and wagtails and sandpipers twitter on both banks as they flit from reach to reach before the boat; overhead a grim hawk quits its station with a scream, to dive into a shadier tree; the azure-winged king-hunter utters its shrill soliloquy in some dark recess; while sweetest of all the unknown calls and cries that make up the general Babel, is the "Where you go? Where you go?" of some cuckoo or mocking-bird.

Meanwhile the prospect is made up of scene after scene of enchantment. At one spot the banks attract the gaze with their grassy fringe alternated with rock and pool; then a clear stretch of bamboos display their feathery screen to the beholder's sight, to be followed by a grove of forest trees down to the water's edge, their boughs almost meeting aloft and forming a canopy of shade and silence over the dark stream.

Again, to relieve the eye, the hillocks are open, with banks and braes like bonny Doon, and alternate growths of tall reeds and rank furze, which make one forget the jungle for a time. Another place seems to show the hand of man, as the low trees, of uniform size and look, bend over the bank for a good quarter of a mile, and no grass or weed spoils the lovers' walk. And everywhere and always, in the background, range beyond range, stand the forest-clad mountains, dreaming of the time when lawns and gardens and tennis-courts will mock the hoary past, and Looshai B. A.'s will revere the relics of their Wallace and their Bruce. There is a spot which some forgotten poet has named "Shiva's Seat." No point on the hundred miles of the river's course presents a more lovely combination of light and shadow, or such a picturesque display of timber trees and verdant shrubs. There is a mirror of still water for nymphs to play in, and a grassy glade for the fairies' dance, while beyond, the forest yawns like a cavern where goblins may sit and glare. Just in the midde of the view, and commanding all its beauties at once, a large flat rock rises out of the water, and this in some bygone day caught the fancy of a Hindoo warrior or trader with a poet's soul, as he toiled his way toward Bepari Bazaar. Investing his god with a soul like his own, he divined that immediately Shiva had rolled the stone where it stood, that he might sit there and drink his fill of the entrancing scene.

But evening falls, and darkness envelopes the undergrowth, while the trees still stand out clearly against the sky. The calls of day also give place to the sounds of night. The lungoor and the huluk monkey are heard no more, but the loud alarm of the barking deer awakes the forest. A flying squirrel floats across the space between two trees, and once seen is remembered for life. Strange owls hoot in different directions, and nightjars utter their curious note. The diminutive owl of the Himalayas pipes all night with a clear, flute-like note. It feels very strange to be alone in the darkness amid so much active life. But the hum of insect-life is wanting: mosquitoes do not trouble us, and few moths or flies come to our little lamp. I was lying awake one night when I saw something moving among the bamboos of the boat's roof. I first took it for a leech and then for a caterpillar, but a closer inspection revealed a centipede four inches long. This was serious, but a little

ingenuity killed the venomous thing, before it could disappear among the wraps and blankets of the crowded cabin. Barring a small plague of sandflies one day, this was the only thing that troubled us. It was a relief to be out of the leech-infested jungles of Cachar, where ticks as well as leeches came out of the grass and fastened on one, and swarms of flying things peppered the face and eyes at noon as well as in the twilight. A tick, smaller than a dog-tick, attached itself to my eyelid, among the eyelashes, and caused irritation that lasted several days. But after Jhalnacherra we were free from molestation. For five nights our boat lay moored in the heart of a forest which, according to the story-books, ought to have swarmed with tigers and bears and wolves: yet, nothing worse than an otter came near us, and of the many sounds that rang through the night none was indicative of danger. The great gecko of the Burma hills and all this region, had its haunt in many a tree, and its deep "geck—ko!" sounded like the call of a ghost. The lower hills, corresponding with the Himalayan Tarai, where our first night was passed, contain elephants, pig, and wild dogs, as well as tigers, which go down and kill cattle in the adjacent tea gardens. But the upper ranges seem to be devoid of large game, so that the Looshais do not shut up their cattle and pigs at night like the Khasis, and the telegraph parties, who go straight through everything as the crow flies, bivouack in the open or under the flimsiest shelter.

The most enterprizing beast in these parts is the porpoise, which ascends the river within a day's journey of Changsil, or as far as the shallow water will float its bulky body. One day we passed a Muhammadan hermit, whose copious blessings were cut short to make time for a very unspiritual demand for *bakhshish* when he found that we were not disposed to stop and hear him finish. Further on was a military post with a jamadar and a dozen sepoys killing time in scanty huts. Another day we encountered a whole fleet of boats, with Colonel Evans, five officers, and 400 sepoys of the 43rd Goorkha Rifles, who were returning from a tour, promenade, armed demonstration—call it which you will—among the Looshai Hills, and making a terrific uproar at one of the rapids.

On the evening ot the fourth day, when we moored for the night, the boatmen evinced alarm, and begged that there might

be no loud talking, as that would inform the Looshais of our presence, and bring them down to loot if for nothing worse. However, we slept soundly

> "Until the heath-cock shrilly crew
> And morning dawned on Benvenue,"

or whatever the Looshais call the hill towering above us. Next day about noon, we reached a point where a few Looshais are in the habit of coming down to the water to trade with passing boats, and found three men and five boys waiting for us. They were not such specimens as officers describe who have seen hundreds of the tribe: they were weak and puny, without the bones and muscles of mountaineers, and they seemed to have no idea of barter.

They innocently gave up a large bunch of unripe plantains, and all the yams they had, and begged earnestly for tobacco and salt, taking as much or as little as was given to them. But when asked for an ornament out of his hair—an immense, clumsy pin of bright brass—one of them indicated by signs that he wanted a piece of cloth for it. They took sugar with pleasure, but craved for salt; and they were delighted to receive a box of matches each, the use of which several of them knew perfectly well. They carried flint and steel, with a small shred of cotton cloth, in little boxes neatly cut out of solid wood, and one of the boys lost no time in lighting an awkward pipe of bamboo. A cigar amused them, but they evidently preferred the strong and voluminous smoke out of the thick bamboo stem. It was amusing to see them, in their craving for anything saltish, eat the ash of the cigar, and even the heads of the lucifer matches as fast as they struck them.

Copper pice and two-annas pieces they seemed indifferent to, and I am told that the rupee is the only coin of which the Looshais have yet learned the value—being thus literally born into civilization with a silver spoon in their mouths. The boys pleased us much by their courage and frankness, and two of them, who had open countenances and curled or frizzled hair, were quite girlish in appearance. Although they did not seem precocious or to know too much, one of them was unmistakably cleverer than the rest. He made desperate attempts to talk, and corrected our mispronunciation of Looshai words smartly. One

of those whom I have called girlish laughed repeatedly with perfect artlessness and the sweetest expression.

The smallest of the party had a loose tooth which he tugged at with his fingers several times till the pain made him desist. It was strange to observe how quick they were to hear a distant call in the midst of the most animated babbling. Once a boat was coming down the stream from Changsil, and the boatmen hailed from a long way off; and twice a faint cooey came from a Looshai on another hill. In each instance one of the boys stopped talking in a moment and gave a long cry, then listened intently for the response. As soon as the boat was announced, all the boys rushed to certain dead logs and to burrows under the roots of trees, where they had stores of yams hidden, and unearthing these hurried with them down to the river. For we had ascended the bank a hundred yards or more, and were holding a palaver in a shady place. These eight Looshais belonged to Lenkoonga, about five miles from the river, a large village of between 400 and 500 houses, which was burned by the people themselves after Captain Browne's murder, but has been built again since the restoration of good will.

The new road between Changsil and the plains passes close to the village, and some of the Looshais are working on it. The "jhooms," or clearings for cultivation, belonging to the villagers are scattered along the hillsides to a distance of some miles from the village, and each has a bamboo hut in the centre for storing the grain. Our friends passively resisted our efforts to induce them to take us to their village, but I climbed to a jhoom that was near the river, and examined the store-house. It was clean and empty, and had a fetish of feathers at the entrance. There was also a pile of fruits and flowers, with what looked like blood, on the ground under the raised platform, which I took to be an offering.

CHAPTER III.—THE RAID ON CHANGSIL.

Fort Changsil is quite a different place from Fort William or Fort St. George. It is not much more formidable than Rome must have been when Remus jumped over the wall. But the Looshais look before they leap, which Remus, poor fellow, did not do; and so, although they tried for a whole month with everything in their favour, not a man of them got past the barrier. This barrier consists simply of stout poles, eight or ten feet high, planted like palings, and the "fort" so made measures about seventy yards by thirty. At two opposite corners are little towers, whence five or six sepoys can enfilade a body of Looshais attempting to storm the stockade; while the stormers are further impeded by a bank of loose earth, up which they must run if they can, as an unfortunate ant tries to run up the sides of an ant-lion's pit into which it has fallen. The entrance—let us call it gateway—is guarded by a portcullis consisting of a bamboo frame covered on the outside with sharp bamboo spikes, sufficient to check a rush of Looshais for a few seconds till the sepoys within have time to project the muzzles of their rifles through the interstices. Such is the outside of Fort Changsil, which stands on the top of a steep hill 500 feet above the river, where you disembark from your boat. The elevation of the river itself at this point, after all the toilsome way from Jhalnacherra, is only 300 feet, which gives a total height for Changsil of 800 feet above sea level, with a climate of course not very much better than that of the plains.

When you return the sentry's salute and enter the stockade, you find yourself in a museum of bamboo work. We are now in the heart of Looshailand, and the Looshais could give points to the Chinese in the uses to which they can put the bamboo. They make bamboo ropes for their cattle and bamboo thread for their needles, with twine and cord of all intermediate sizes, including bowstrings and, for anything I know, fiddle strings and banjo strings. They make buckets and boxes, hair-pins and earrings, tobacco-pipes and cooking-pots. The cooking-pots can only be used once, as they supply their own fuel; but then they are cheap and can be replaced with a slash of a dao on the nearest bamboo-tree. The Looshais are also well acquainted with the way of piercing the partitions

between the joints of a large bamboo and converting it into a water-jar, or "choonga." They carry water in nothing else, and such quantities of those curious pitchers do they have in their villages that our officers have sometimes made a requisition for 500 choongas of water, and they have been promptly supplied. These choongas are upwards of six feet long, so that filling them is tedious work, and pouring water out of them is a work of art; for a mistake of an inch in the inclination may empty all the water at once. Custom makes the hillmen wonderfully expert in using them: a man will trip gaily up or down a very steep hill with six choongas tied together on his back, and although the ends are only a few inches off the ground, and come within a hair's-breadth of rocks and stumps of trees every moment or so, his practised eye judges the distance and avoids the obstacles.

So then Fort Changsil, being in Looshailand, and built with Looshai help, is bamboo "from turret to foundation-stone." The stockade I have described contains quarters for officers, with out-houses and a guard-room. There is another, lower down, in which are the sepoys' lines, a shop, and some other premises. Outside are storehouses for grain, and sheds for seventy mules which daily carry 120 maunds of flour, rice, etc., seven miles on the way to Aijal. All these houses are constructed throughout of bamboo, with the exception of a few beams in the larger ones to support them against storms; and they evoke admiration alike by their strength and by the neatness with which the work has been executed. The officers' bungalow is the best example of a house founded, finished, and furnished with bamboo. For flooring we have a strong mat made of split bamboos. The walls are matting of slightly finer make, and the roof is also matting laid on bamboo rafters. Everything is fastened with bamboo string, and the pegs and hooks on the walls are likewise bamboo. Of course, the doors are made of the same useful material, and bamboo trelliswork takes the place of window panes. Unlike glass panes, it keeps out the light, and lets in the air; but one must be prepared for some anomalies in a bamboo fort. Most people are familiar with bamboo chairs, but in Changsil the beds and tables are also made of bamboo. The tables are as level and steady as one could wish, and a clean, fresh bamboo bedstead, with a layer of dry bamboo leaves for a mattress, makes a couch fit for

a prince. The mules and ponies are fed on bamboo leaves instead of grass; and as no wild beast has molested them all the months they have been exposed here, one may be excused for suspecting that even the tigers in Changsil live on bamboo.

Truly grand is the forest that surrounds this fort on every side. The hills extend north, south, east, and west, in vast undulations, and are clothed with impenetrable jungle. It is always a figure of speech to write of Looshais "disappearing into the jungle." The feat will be impossible till two bodies can occupy the same space, or till Looshais are covered with rhinoceros hide. What they do is to run up their paths, which they can find as quickly as a rat finds its hole; and if they are pursued, they crouch behind some leafy shrub, and are as safe as a needle in a haystack. In this forest the trees, for want of room to spread out, grow up as tall and straight as palms: some of them are of remarkable height, while their stateliness fascinates the eye. Many of the trees are mangoes, and it is a novel sight to see them reach up sixty feet or more without branch or leaf. Underneath are bamboos by the million, as close as they can stand, forming a thicket boundless like the ocean. Round about Changsil the dao and the kookree (Native bill-hooks) have been at work, first to clear space and next to obtain fodder. Day by day a small army of syces attack the jungle, felling bamboos right and left, and stripping off their leaves for the mules and ponies. Dead and yellow these bamboos lie, in great patches of network as impassable as before they were impenetrable. The devastation wrought by the telegraph officers is on a larger scale and more methodical. These men want a clear path some thirty feet, wide where no swaying or falling tree will break their wire; and if the lie of the land will permit it to be straight, they deviate not to the right or left. I have seen one of their paths half a mile long, as straight as an avenue, and as smooth as if an iron roller weighing thousands of tons had crushed the jungle into matting.

No account of Changsil would be complete without a notice of two graves that lie within a little bamboo railing in the lower stockade, right by the public path, between barrack and shop—the only spot available during the dire straits of last September, (1890). Thought of danger never disturbed the three officers who held Changsil and Aijal when the outbreak occurred. Only

one small stockade existed at each place, and the jungle was uncleared up to the edge of the fortifications. Men moved in and out without arms or escort, and Captain Browne, the Political Officer—a son of Lord Ulick Browne—said that he could go and live in a Looshai village as securely as in any village of Bengal. The Looshais themselves used to come in freely to trade and palaver and get medicine, and seemed as friendly as possible. But both forts were provisioned to the end of the rainy season, and that saved the garrisons. It was in the first week of September that a report got abroad that Captain Browne was going down to Cachar for additional sepoys, and the big Chief Kolkham, having doubts of his ulterior objects, resolved to wipe out the English. In two days he had raised all the western villages, including those of the powerful Chiefs Thanruma, Tongula, and Lenpunga ; and they came with food, arms, and ammunition, and concealed themselves in the jungle for a simultaneous attack on Aijal and Changsil, and on any escort or convoy between the two forts. Lieutenant Cole was in the stockade at Changsil, but half his Goorkhas were in the woods, cutting fuel and forage, when a succession of shots down below at the river told that something was wrong. The Looshais had attacked Changsil, but instead of suddenly rushing the stockade, they made for a small bazaar which then existed on the river bank, shot several men, and looted about a thousand rupees' worth of goods. The time thus gained enabled the sepoys to come into the stockade, which was then attacked by about two thousand Looshais, according to the estimate of the besieged. Had the savages possessed even a little courage, they could have stormed the inclosure and killed everybody in it. But for the most part they remained concealed in the cover, and those who had guns—several hundred—kept up a fire from all sides on the stockade. As, however, Looshais fire from the hip, in order to avoid the recoil of their heavily charged flint-locks, their shots flew high, and they continued daily practice for nearly a month without doing much harm. On their part, too, they suffered little from the fire of the Goorkhas, as they rarely allowed themselves to be seen. So the worst of the siege was the month's confinement in a very narrow space, the constant liability to attack, and the prolonged suspense : they had a good stock of provisions —rice, "army rations," and biscuit, but only such luxuries that

are allowed under the liberal interpretation of anti-scorbutics—and the rain gave them the water they needed. Had it been necessary to go outside the stockade for water, the list of deaths on both sides would have been heavy. At the end of the first week Mr. Cole called for volunteers to carry despatches to Jhalnacherra, and three Goorkhas offered themselves and went down on a bamboo raft. The Looshais were heard firing at them almost as soon as they started, but bad shooting and the swift September torrent favoured them, so that they completed their perilous journey in safety.

It was on the day of the first attack, while all was excitement within the stockade and the Looshais were yelling and firing their best outside, that somebody exclaimed, "A sahib is coming," and Captain Browne was seen running toward the gate. He had just strength to say, "Hold up my head, or I'll die," when he expired. He had been fired at, and his brachial artery divided, as he was walking from Aijal to Changsil. His pony, which was being led behind him, fell into the hands of the Looshais, and was subsequently recovered, together with a heavy fine, from Lenkoonga's village. It is now at Aijal. The same day, and as a part of the concerted plan, a post midway between Aijal and Changsil was attacked; but the sepoys, eight or ten in number, escaped into the jungle, and made their way, in twos and threes, to Changsil. A *khansaman*, servant to one of the officers, was on the road, and did not escape. The Looshais tied him to a tree and hacked him to death, and his bones were afterwards found bleaching there when our reinforcements suppressed the rising and opened up the road again. Aijal was attacked the same day, and by as large a body as invested Changsil. Dr. Melville, who had only joined as Officiating Civil Surgeon a week before, stood the month's siege with his Goorkhas, and obtained the first relief of his anxiety from a heliograph signal from Changsil that a reinforcement had arrived. Four days later they saw the smoke of Thanruma's large village being burned, and in due course the new Goorkhas came in, and the Looshais fired a few parting shots and retired. These Goorkhas were the party that Lieutenant Swinton was bringing to the relief when he was shot. They were toiling up the Dhaleshwari in boats, which extended for more than a mile. Lieutenant Tytler, the second-in-command, was in front, and

Swinton, some way behind, was seated outside of the little cabin, with his orderly beside him. All at once, two days' journey from Changsil, a volley was fired from an ambush, and a ball grazed the orderly's forehead and entered Swinton's side. It was war in a moment. The bugle sounded, and the Goorkhas leaped ashore and fired on the Looshais who swarmed up the hillside; but the result of their fire could only be surmised. They lost two or three men themselves, some who fell at the first volley, and one who was shot by the Looshais as they were running away. The boatmen are said to have jumped overboard and lain in the water, with only their noses above the surface; but one of them, who took me up to Changsil, said that although he quaked with fear, he kept up his spirit by crying, "Allah! Great is Allah!" According to his lively account, the Looshais were on *both* sides of the river, and their bullets came like hail. However, it was soon over, and the sepoys returned to their boats and carried their dead to Changsil, where Swinton was buried by the side of Browne. Great sorrow was felt for both officers when the sad news reached Shillong, and the Chief Commissioner and Mrs. Quinton sent two boxes of violets and roses to be set beside their graves.

No time was lost in setting out on the work of vengeance, and village after village was called upon to submit and pay a heavy fine. Three leading Chiefs came in, and, to their utter dismay, were removed as prisoners to Silchar, thence to be sent on to Tezpur. This masterpiece of policy has made a profound impression on the tribesmen, many of whom beg for permission to go to the plains and assure themselves of the well-being of their late lamented Chiefs. A similar measure is designed for Thanruma, but he has so far preferred the chances of concealment. Other Chiefs, less guilty, were allowed to go home again, and are now pondering the easy life and rich rewards of peace. Then the Goorkhas were led against those villages, nine large and several small, which continued contumacious; and it is rich to hear eye-witnesses relate how they flew upon the spoil catching the goats, pigs, fowls, and mythun, (giant cattle, called also *gayal* and *metna*) sometimes to the number of hundreds, before setting the huts on flame. They enjoyed the prospect of a change from "rations."

CHAPTER IV.—AIJAL: A NUCLEUS OF CIVILISATION.

Fort Aijal illustrates the inherent greatness of Englishmen. Less than a year ago it was not different from any other of the Looshai Hills. Five months ago it endured a siege, and was half burned. Already it is an incipient Simla, even to a bandstand and football ground. Its elevation is 3,800 feet, and its climate is delightful. Its special feature is the view; and its worst point is the water-supply. It is the head-quarters of the Northern Looshai Hills district. There live the Political Officer, the Commandant, the Second-in-Command, and the Civil Surgeon. A future generation will see public meetings in Silchar to protest against "The Aijal Exodus." The crowning glory of the station is the Mess Bungalow, which is as large as a Calcutta palace, and has not a nail in it. Christopher Wren was a great man, no doubt; but he was at a tremendous advantage in having brick and mortar to work with. I should have liked to see what he could do with an unlimited supply of bamboos and nothing besides. No man ever deserved an honorary degree better than the architect of that Mess Bungalow deserves to be styled a Master of Civil Engineering. The top of a hill was cut away to make room for it, and on the platform so contrived the bungalow stands in all its ample dimensions, with bed-rooms and bath-rooms, dining-room, billiard-room, and library, all complete. The central hall is a sight to behold. Great pillars of iron-wood, as smooth and hard as marble, support the lofty roof. Across are beams of a lighter wood, squared with the adze by carpenters, who never saw a plane. All the rest—rafters, roof, and wall—are of bamboo, the choicest work of Looshai experts, and every fastening, from the stoutest to the finest, is of cane; for my statement, that the whole building does not contain a nail, is literally true. When a skilful Looshai builder is told to do his best, he shows an eye for straight lines and a sense of proportion, a deftness of hand and a nicety of touch, not to be found in any *paharees* of Hindustan. His binding and looping and knotting—with bamboo for rope and cane for twine—look like the work of machinery, and jagged points and uneven edges disappear before his tiny adze and wonderful *dao*. Dispensing with paint and paint-brush, he alternately exposes the inside and outside of his bamboo strips; so that the strong matting walls

of his building display a picturesque zigzag of white and green bands, altogether in keeping with the trim thatch and tidy corners of the shapely edifice. A capacious verandah affords shade from sun and rain, and at night the grandest of lamps beams like a beacon from the dinner-table.

The inferior buildings of Aijal make up a little town, and all except the *coolies'* huts are inclosed in stockades. The population is large and most curious : say, 400 Goorkhas, with their band of thirty instruments ; 300 Naga coolies obtained from the Raja of Manipur, and well lodged *outside* of the stockades in the light of current events * ; 300 Khasi and Garo coolies, obtained with difficulty at Rs. 14 a month and free rations ; 100 Mikirs and Assamese of sorts ; 100 Looshais, changed every seven days, working out the atonement for their outrages in free labour ; and a small army of syces, muleteers, and other camp followers. The Goorkhas are Goorkhas. More cannot be said in their praise, but it is good to see the unrestrained pride and admiration with which the "splendid fellows" are regarded by their officers. Every evening men and officers join in a furious game of football, while the tamer tribes gather round in a great circle, gazing at the superfluous energy and love of hard knocks. Not a few of the Goorkhas sport the frontier medal, but the chief medallist is a lean and tattered mule-driver, who wears three decorations on his spare bosom, including the Khedive's Star. Some of the mules, too, have seen service in Egypt, but they carry their medals in the shape of scars and callosities. The Khasis are, of course, the most intelligent and advanced of the coolies, but the Nagas are the most interesting. They possess jovial spirits, and do a great deal of talking and laughing. They will come smiling all over to the officers' quarters, to beg for a treat of rum or other strong liquor, and sitting down will drink it off with manifestations of unspeakable satisfaction. They shave the sides of their heads, and leave the hair growing on the top like a cock's comb. Stranger even than this peculiarity, however, is the habit of perforating their ears and distending the holes with rags, wood, straw, feathers, metal, or almost anything else, till they flap about the sides of their heads like the ears of a dog or an elephant. It is

* The Munneepoor massacre occurred just about the time this account was being written.

common to see the lobe of the ear as large as a napkin ring, and plugged with blue, red, or white materials, while the upper part has two or three large holes similarly decorated. They also tie a long fine strip of cane many times round the leg, just below the knee, apparently to check relaxation of the muscles in their climbing; for the Nagas make grand hill coolies, going long distances with heavy loads on their backs. They are, or used to be, the best armed of all the tribes on our north-east frontier, and many people, in Bengal at least, have seen their formidable spears, thickly and prettily bound in the middle with red thread. They carry *daos* also, and can clear jungle with anybody; but as their villages in their own country are substantially built of stone and brick, they have not learned to use bamboo like the ever-migrating Looshais. Yet another thing which strikes a stranger is their habit of grunting "haw, haw," all the time they are at work. A gang of them can be distinguished from other coolies at Aijal a long way off by this habit. It also deserves to be mentioned that they wear their scanty clothing with less regard to decency than any of the other tribes here, except perhaps the Mikirs, who are a very low people, physically weak and without ambition: those Mikirs I have seen wear no ornaments, and leave their hair as it grows. The indifference of the Nagas to cold seems remarkable. I watched them at work digging and carrying earth on a bitterly cold day, with drizzling rain and a raw wind which froze the marrow; and while the Khasis had turbans on, and were enveloped in clothing from head to foot, and the Looshais wore ample sheets clumsily wrapped about their bodies, they seemed as comfortable in their loin-cloths as if it had been the heat of summer.

But of the various races to be seen in Aijal, the only natives are the Looshais, and a good deal has already been told about them in this paper and the preceding papers of this series. Most of those I saw had a sullen, scowling aspect, which is not difficult to account for in the humiliating position they occupy just at present. But I am assured by men who have known the Looshais for years, that they altogether want the cheery spirits of the Nagas and the Khasis. I helped to place some of them in position for a photograph, and even then their curiosity and enthusiasm were of the mildest order. What they have learned quickest and best is to ask an exorbitant price if you want one of their pipes or spears

or ornaments. The men have a most singular appearance from their practice of wearing their hair long, parted in the middle, and gathered in a chignon at the back of the head. So singular is the effect of this fashion that, in the absence of hair on the face, a stranger can scarcely believe the men are not women. A Looshai of rank or wealth often has a turban, as a novelty in head-dress seems to be the first thing to strike the taste of a savage, and his clothing is of fine material and rich colour; but the ordinary people go about with coarse and dirty cotton sheets folded about their persons, and they have constant difficulty to keep these from getting disarranged and dragging on the ground. An armed Looshai carries a *dao*, a heavy but ill-made spear, and a very old flint-lock gun, which bears marks of much repair at the hands of the village blacksmith. When the last two have been taken from him, he still retains his *dao*, a pipe, a regular Highland sporran, his flint and steel to light his pipe, and one or more hairpins, which are clumsy and curious enough to deserve separate mention. These hairpins are most often of bright brass, large enough to weigh an ounce and more, and bent like a lady's hairpin, with the usual turns to make them catch in the hair. Another pattern is a straight bar of steel, which is sometimes neatly shaped; and then there are cheap substitutes of wire, ivory, or bamboo. What I have called a sporran is a bag of cotton netting slung over the shoulder, in which the Looshais carry the little box containing their flint and steel, and any other small articles they may have picked up or otherwise acquired. It is covered in front with a long fringe of goat's hair, which gives it exactly the appearance of a sporran; but a superior article has a piece of tiger's skin instead of the goat's hair, and one I saw was tastefully decorated with the skin taken intact off a tiger's head and face. A tuft of goat's hair is often hung from the neck as a charm to keep off disease, and necklaces of beads obtained by barter are quite common. But the handsomest necklaces are made of transparent, amber-like stones, found by the Looshais in their own jungles. Their pipes are made of bamboo, the bowl being lined with a strip of brass or copper; and the pipes used by the women have an additional receptacle of bamboo under the bowl, into which the tobacco juice filters through a small hole. It is a very curious custom that the women alone should collect this juice, and that the men should drink it in water as an esteemed luxury. The

Looshais gratify their simple ideas of ornament by making a kind of coarse lacquer, red and black, and among other articles the stocks of their guns are well smeared with it. When mentioning the Looshais' guns I ought to have referred to the powder-horn, which is simply the polished horn of a mythun, painted with neat designs in lacquer. A tight plug of cloth at the pointed end (the other end being closed up by some means) keeps the powder dry, and a tip of wood or horn is screwed over that. The Looshais make a coarse-grained powder, but they are hard put to it for bullets, sometimes using copper pice hammered round. They usually put two bullets in a charge, and the whole loading and firing of their pieces is a critical process, the locks being as often as not out of order.

He has not seen Aijal who has not seen the rats that infest the place. They are coarse-furred vermin, with the shortened heads characteristic of field rats, and whitish on the under parts. The species is the same at Aijal and 3,000 feet lower down at Changsil, and I suppose that they are the rats which occasionally invade the crops of the Looshais in countless hordes, and destroy their year's harvest. At Aijal their name is legion: they spend the whole night racing about the bamboo houses, and gnaw everything they can get at with their teeth. An indent for one hundred rat-traps was responded to with praiseworthy promptitude, but he who thinks to diminish rats by means of traps should try his 'prentice hand on mosquitoes. The experience will be the same, and more cheaply purchased.

Aijal affords a view of many hill-tops, and on five of these are Looshai villages, or their burned sites. A thing I have been told is that there would be fewer mistakes in the maps of this region if the hills were marked instead of the villages. The Looshais move their villages about once in seven years, or whenever the soil of their *jhooms* becomes exhausted, and each change vitiates the maps in which the sites are marked. But they have separate names for all the mountain peaks, and if these were set down in the maps, the geography of the country would be correctly represented.

CHAPTER V.—AN ARMED PROMENADE.

On the 9th of March (1891) Colonel Evans, with five officers and 400 men of the 43rd Goorkha Rifles, started down the river in boats, for Cachar, from Changsil, having returned that morning in company with Mr. McCabe, B.C.S., Political Officer in the Northern Looshai Hills, from a forty-two days' tour through the eastward section of the country. Part of the country they have passed through was unsurveyed, and some hill-peaks and villages visited will now be entered in the maps for the first time. The correct sites of other places were found to be far from the spots tentatively shown in the maps; and these were accurately indicated. Perhaps it is unnecessary to mention that the section of country thus traversed had no share (unless secret rejoicing be called a share) in the outbreak of last September, when Captain Browne and Lieutenant Swinton lost their lives, and that consequently the villages have not been burned nor the people scattered. Indeed, the eastern villages are able to plume themselves on their good behaviour, and consequent good treatment, in comparison with those of the western hills, whose burned and blackened sites lie as a warning to all Looshai-land that peace once made ought to be kept. So the object of Mr. McCabe's expedition, or "military promenade," was simply to see if the eastern Chiefs intended to be as good as their word, and recognized the suzerainty of our Government. The result cannot be described otherwise than as a complete success, not a hand having been raised in anger during the whole promenade; and it justifies the estimate formed of Mr. McCabe by Government from previous experience of his felicity in conciliating the Hill tribes. *

Counting from Fort Aijal, the headquarters of what has been a recognized "district" since last year, the party marched about 31 miles north, 61 miles east, and more than 100 miles south. Twice they traced their steps back again for several marches, re-crossing streams and spurs, in order to make a fresh start in a new direction. Every step of the way was done on foot, Mr. McCabe and Colonel Evans tramping with the rest.

* This excellent officer lost his life at Shillong, in the earthquake of 1897.

A horde of Naga and Mikir coolies carried provisions for the force; but this was less burdensome than it sounds, as tribute, in the shape of provisions and labour, was levied on the Looshai villages, each village being required to deliver the party "all found" at the next village. The political purpose of this arrangement is more important than the commissariat purpose; for the Looshais are like certain potentates, who, paradoxical as it may seem, would rather be ground down by Russia than fattened by England.

Our business in these hills is mainly to prevent the Looshais from raiding on the tribes which are under our protection: they say they will not do it again, but then they change their minds; and when we send an officer to enquire about it, they treacherously murder him, and call it defending their hearths and homes from the invader and the tyrant. So a different pair of spectacles has to be given to them by burning their villages, destroying their crops, and carrying off their cattle. This takes their thoughts back to the first point, and they begin to wish that they had not raided our subjects. So when we pay them a visit with velvet gloves on, they are quite ready to settle the account with a reasonable quantity of rice, fowls, eggs, pigs, goats, mythun (also called metnas) and labour, and are agreeably surprised to find that we do not take their wives and daughters also. The account settled, they receive nothing but justice and kindness from us, and the wiser heads among them begin to question whether honesty may not be the best policy. If, in addition, they can be taught the use of money, and be initiated into the mysteries of trade, as far, for instance, as our friends the Kaboolees understand it, they may soon be so much interested in the government of the country as to send a delegate to the National Congress. It is a capital thing to have a genuine Bengalee Baboo in these Hills. Down in the plains he becomes exquisitely patriotic; but a little change from sentiment to real life, and an inside view of the *Pax Britannica*, convert him into a loyal subject of the Queen and an ardent admirer of our frontier policy.

As Mr. McCabe's party proceeded further away from its base, first one hundred and then a second hundred of the sepoys were left behind, while communication was kept up from post to post, and as far as possible with Aijal, by the heliograph.

Of the 13 villages visited, ten consisted of upwards of 200 houses, which is a marked contrast with the Chittagong side, where 100 houses make a large village. The largest was Lenkham, with 852 houses: Poiboi had 712; Bungleya, 583; Lalbura, 457; and Kairuma, 401. Poiboi, the most northern point of the tour, was reached after a stiff climb of 2,800 feet in two and-a-half miles. Here a very friendly reception was given to the party by the Looshais, who assembled in durbar to the number of 2,500, and cheerfully consented to abide by the terms laid down to them, and in return petitioned for the re-opening of Sonai Bazaar and the surrender of certain captives said to be held by neighbouring Chiefs. A similar request was made by the people of another large village, and it seems to be the fact that, besides their quarrels among themselves, the Looshais are regularly harried by hillmen from the Manipur side. The Bazaar asked for used to occupy a similar position on the Sonai river to that which Changsil or Beparee Bazaar occupies on the Dhaleshwari. It was closed in consequence of last year's military operations, and the fact that the Looshais themselves wish to have it re-opened is a favourable sign. Three petty Rajas, besides the two young sons of Poiboi, who himself died last year, were at the durbar, and one of them made a fine impression by his physical appearance and independence of manner. As a rule the Looshai Chiefs are too fat to fight, and therefore the personal prowess of Tongula, one of the three deported to Tezpur, brought him considerable fame. When we consider that physical strength and courage are the usual qualifications for leadership among savage tribes, it is not a little remarkable that the effeminate Looshai Chiefs should exercise almost absolute control; so that a man like Kolkham (who is now safe in Tezpur) could induce a number of subordinate Chiefs, and ten or fifteen thousand cowardly, half-armed men, to rise against the British power when their crops were all in the ground and starvation was certain to stare them in the face if the outbreak failed. Similarly, the word of the Chief was sufficient to give our officers out of a single village as many guns as we thought they had, hundreds of fowls, scores of goats and pigs, several mythun, and several hundred maunds of rice. Speaking of the durbar at Poiboi's village, a leading Mantri or Councillor presented the two lads

to the Political Officer and asked him to stand to them in the place of their deceased father. The younger took Mr. McCabe's hand, and both the boys, whose ages are 12 and 10, went through the presentation manfully. This younger son will, according to Looshai custom, be his father's successor; for a Looshai zamindar, or head of a village, gives a slice of his possessions to each of his sons in order, and the youngest, who has to wait till the old man's death, gets the bulk that remains. After the durbar the Goorkhas delighted the Looshai with a display of their bayonet exercise, and the gentlemen bared their legs and arms times without number to assure the wondering and incredulous tribesmen that they were "all white.'

Bungleya, whose village was twice visited, also gave the, party a hearty reception, supplying 300 coolies, taking charge of a quantity of stores till the party returned from the south, and begging quinine to cure persistent remittent fever. However, he was a little fearful at the beginning, being suspected of complicity in last year's raid—the Chengri Valley raid—and asked the officers to meet him without a guard. But he evinced no fear at the interview, and spoke for himself freely and boldly, and without the usual references to his Mantris. Lalbura was not so tractable, although there has been nothing against him since 1871, when we burned his village for his share in the murder of Mr. Winchester and the carrying off of his daughter. He sent his Mantris to make terms and supply whatever the party wanted, but kept in hiding himself till his village was actually taken possession of. Then he consented to show himself at a place outside the village, provided Mr. McCabe and Colonel Evans came unattended. They went, and found a large man of goodly presence and with finger-nails two inches long—a mark of gentility, not of ferocity. He was surrounded by fifty warriors armed with daos, and had posted sentries at all the points of advantage round about, being evidently determined to sacrifice his village to our sepoys rather than suffer himself to be taken prisoner. He was in great fear, and closed the interview by conceding whatever was asked, and then retiring in a hurry. This important Chief ought to have had nothing on his conscience, yet he did not understand the connection between sin and

punishment, nor, after twenty years' experience of us, did he have confidence that we would not deport him to Tezpur, as we had done the treacherous murderers Kolkham, Tongula, and Lenpunga, simply because he was a Looshai. Lenkham, whose village was the most eastern point visited, was also afraid, and made a rather ludicrous exhibition of his nervousness. His large village was on the highest peak of the Jolgnak range, at an elevation of 5,600 feet. Still higher was Lungliana's village, at an elevation of 5,600 feet. This was burned last year, or 1889, with those of the memorable Lenpunga and Nikama, but all three have been re-built. Kairuma was the most southern point reached by the party, and from there they effected heliographic communication with Mr. Murray's party from Chittagong, which had reached Lalbuta. They thus learned of the brave fight at Jakopa's village.

Four considerable rivers, besides many streams, were crossed by the party, viz., the Sonai, the Tuirini, the Tinvol, and the Tinchung: the last, which was the largest, was passed over several times. The mountain ranges—called *klang* by the Looshais—passed over were the Saitol Klang, 4,500 feet, the Kolkul Klang, 4,550 feet, and the Jolgnak Klang. These ranges run north and south, and the four rivers, with the Dhaleshwari, follow the same direction, flowing into Cachar. The country is well watered and most fertile, with more than ordinary conveniences for trade; so that its development and civilization may be confidently expected to follow the establishment of peace between the tribes and confidence in the Government.

It goes without saying that the tour involved a good deal of stiff climbing, especially as there were several abrupt ascents and descents of from 800 to 1,800 feet, and the road is never more than a jungle path; but the party were favoured with a pleasant weather, except for four days of rain. The soil here is clayey, and when wet it becomes almost too slippery for hobnails and alpenstocks. When a high wind and dense volumes of mist accompany or follow the rain, the cold can be better realized by experience than from a description. I am writing now in just such weather—and shivering.

Two hopeful indications observed during this tour were the complete submission of the people, and their general fearlessness in

the presence of Europeans and Goorkhas. It really seems as if many of the Looshais were beginning to believe that no treachery is to be apprehended from us, and that we can burn their villages and loot their stores without any hatred of themselves. As instances of their submission it may be stated that, with the curious exceptions mentioned, the villagers and their Chiefs received the party with every appearance of good will, not merely complying with orders, but assenting to the reasonableness and custom of paying a nominal tribute; and that they sometimes sent a deputation with supplies to meet the party and conduct them to the village. At the same time, Captain Browne's murder has taught the lesson that the Looshais are not to be trusted, and every European is now careful not to leave a post without the attendance of two or three sepoys, sufficient to rescue him if wounded and to recover his body if killed. Before that deplorable event the Looshais were in the habit of daily visiting the posts; and even some of their women had begun to come in for medical treatment: so that there was no dream of danger, and the very forts and posts were only half defended. Yet all at once some 6,000 men made an organized attack along the whole line from Aijal to Changsil, and held those places in siege for more than a month, their cowardice alone preventing the extirpation of our entire force of officers and Goorkhas and the destruction of every vestige of our occupation.

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